

August 1, 2007

The Honorable Judd Gregg
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
393 Russell Senate Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Gregg,

We, the undersigned organizations, applaud the progress and accomplishments you have made with the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). We also applaud the many great accomplishments you have made for the conservation, preservation and recreation of New Hampshire's environment. We are writing to you because we feel these two priorities of yours come together in an exciting opportunity to include environmental education in NCLB. Specifically, we are asking that you support the amendment language of the No Child Left Inside Act of 2007 (H.R. 3036).

Environmental education is critical not only for scientific literacy. It has demonstrated its ability to spark substantial gains in school enrollment by choice, student achievement, and standardized test scores. National studies show that environmental education enhances student achievement, critical thinking, and basic life skills.

We see our economic strength, our commitment to opportunity, and even our national security as inextricably linked to environmental challenges such as global warming and depletion of natural resources. Improvements to NCLB will strengthen the ability for public schools of New Hampshire to address these issues.

In other words, our children need to be environmentally literate in order to be responsible citizens of the 21st Century – and many feel that this literacy is just as important as being able to do math, understand history, or speak a foreign language.

National studies have brought into question the environmental literacy of our children. One study found that children can identify over 1,000 corporate logos but less than 10 plants and animals native to their back yards. Another study found that children today spend an average of 6 hours each day in front of the computer and TV but less than *4 minutes a day* in unstructured outdoor play, leading researchers to discover a new condition specific to this current generation that they have called “nature deficit disorder”.

We believe it is critical to reverse this trend and provide children with a solid understanding of the planet and the problems it faces. As they will be called upon throughout their lives to sort out various environmental claims and issues impacting their jobs, health, security, and transportation, our children need to have the tools to be able to make wise decisions and choices.

To that end, we support several changes to the No Child Left Behind Act that would emphasize the importance of environmental education:

- New funding should be available to help states develop rigorous environmental education standards and improve teacher training.
- To be eligible for new environmental education funding, states would be required to develop plans to ensure that their students are environmentally literate.

We hope you'll work with us to create a generation prepared for the world they will inherit. If you would like additional information, please contact Don Baugh, representing the No Child Left Inside Coalition, 410-268-8816, or dbaugh@cbf.org. You may also contact Jack Calhoun from Antioch University New England, (603) 283-2108, or jcalhoun@antiochne.edu.

Sincerely,

New Hampshire Environmental Education Organizations:

Appalachian Mountain Club
Antioch University New England
Harris Center for Conservation Education